

House Budget Debate Update

Please see House Ways/Means posting [here](#) for more on House Budget advances.

On Monday, April 24, the debate began on the House version of the State budget, which was initiated through the release of the House Ways and Means Committee bill, H. 3900. Ways and Means Chair Michlewitz and committee members released a positive proposal for our community.

We thank our champions in the House including Representatives Denise Garlick, Sean Garballey, John Lawn, Jim O'Day and Carmine Gentile.

The Arc moved ahead with four amendments, two of them in partnerships with ADDP, and another also championed by Ma Alliance for 21st Century Policy. Those amendments each had a long list of co-sponsors who joined the lead sponsors.

One of the four amendments was accepted in debate. We are grateful to Representative John Lawn for filing this amendment to support The Arc's health equity work. 38 Representative cosponsors stepped up to help pass this amendment, which was incorporated into the House budget. It includes the language of the Operation House Call (OHC) legislation as well as needed resources for the program, which is active at 6 medical and nursing schools.

- Rep. Garballey's amendment would have added \$5.6 Mil to the Day/Employment budget for individuals who require 1:1 services, with language to allow the assistance to be used for persons served by MassHealth, yet are DDS eligible (Dept. of Developmental Services).
- Rep. O'Day's amendment was a language amendment, that would have reinforced that DDS search for novel approaches (home and community) to address the many individuals that continue to be at home without access to day programs.
- Rep. Gentile's amendment would have reinforced implementation of the Real Lives as passed in 2014.

Again, these three amendments did not pass but they each had dozens of sponsors. In a short amount of time, **you and** others in our community reached out to house members and were able to enlist them as supporters. Thank you!

As we move to the Senate and follow up with the House, we need to convey the facts which can't be disputed – you can help with that by sharing your story with your Representative and Senator:

- Very few if ANY day providers are up to full contract funding and attendance relative to pre-COVID – remember the DDS day/employment budget is not close to Gov. Baker's FY'21 request prior to the COVID shutdown.
- We haven't had a mass exodus of adults with disabilities to other states
- Our workforce crisis in disability services at DDS and MassHealth is severe and continues in this endemic.

- Since March 2020, 3,900 have students graduated high school at age 22 years (1,438 this year), and many have the need for continued day services and allied health therapies.
- The largest sub-group (1,000-2,500?) who have not been served are those who need 1:1 support for part or all of the day.
- Health equity work through Operation House Call need your continued advocacy!

As we move on to the Senate, let's work hard to share our message and goals!

House Ways Means Posting here: <https://thearcofmass.org/advocacy/state-budget/>